

GUJARATI PAINTING
IN THE
FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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A Further Essay on Vasanta Vilāsa

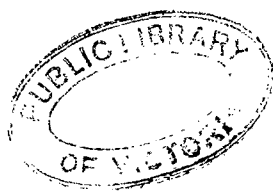
BY

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NOTE.—Owing to technical difficulties it has not been found possible to reproduce all the best pictures in the roll. The author has revised the manuscript, but he has not been able to check the references to the illustrations contained in the text in view of his absence in India.

TO
DIWAN BAHADUR
PROFESSOR KESHAVLĀL H. DHRUVA
IN GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

*Footnotes in Sanskrit have been omitted
owing to technical difficulties.*

GUJARATI PAINTING IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

A FURTHER ESSAY ON VASANTA VILĀSA

[References to the illustrations are indicated by †]

PROFESSOR K. H. Dhruva has now edited the Gujarati poem *Vasanta Vilāsa* and published it as a part of the volume entitled *Prāchīna Gūjara Kāvya*. He has added at my suggestion an appendix of all the Sanskrit and Prakrit verses found in the pictorial roll described in chapter ii. of my book—"Studies in Indian Painting." I propose to set down the results of a further study of this illustrated manuscript. The first six verses of the *Vasanta Vilāsa* are missing from the manuscript, together with the accompanying illustrations. Professor Dhruva considers that the poem must have been composed in the beginning of the fifteenth century—about half a century earlier than the date of its illustrated copy by Ratnāgar. The poem gives no information whatever about its author, and begins after the usual prayer to Saraswati, "with the Vinā in her right hand and the swan as her cognizance,"* to describe the joys and pleasures of spring in direct, terse, rollicking, and picturesque verse. It is frankly sensual, but there can be no doubt as to the high quality of its poetry, and it speaks well for the tastes of the times that the poem should have rapidly won popularity to the

* The association of the peacock, as the cognizance of Saraswati, seems to be of much later period—at least later than the sixteenth century. Is it because the scholarship of the later times was more effectively symbolized by the symbol of vanity and pomp?

extent that it is quoted in Jaina writings of the beginning of the sixteenth century, such as *Bhoja-Prabandha* by Ratnamandira, written in A.D. 1500, and that it should have supplied the theme for the exhibition of pictorial skill for the library of the Gujarati Shrimāl Jaina aristocrat—probably Shāh Shrī Chandrapāla. Chandrapāla must have been a man of catholic tastes, for the illustrations do not deal with the traditional orthodox and austere themes of the Jaina Kalpa Sūtras, but with the pleasures of life which the Jains have scrupulously excluded, at least in their grosser manifestations, from their temples and libraries. All the *dramatis personæ* in the pictures wear the mark of the Vaishnava piety* even in the lightest moments of gaiety and, what is rare in Indian art, some of them are quite nude. The tide of Vaishnavism was in full swing in the fifteenth century, and the cult of Bhakti had taken the place of Tāntrism—the sequel of decadent Buddhism—and the love of Rādhā and Krishna was fast becoming the dominant medium of expression for poets, musicians, painters, prophets, and the public.† Rādhā was the new divinity which was thrown up at the end of the medieval period, for through her illicit amours—literally or symbolically interpreted according to the aptitude, age, temperament, and leanings of the devotees—were expressed, and in a way satisfied, the trembling

* Cf. "Kalpa Sutra," translated by J. Stevenson (1847), p. 57, where the morning sun is compared to "the red mark that adorns the forehead of children and women."

† The gathering force of the Bhakti cult was not accidental, for this devotional monotheism was partly a result of Islamic influence and partly because the worship of God—religion, in other words—was the one avenue of escape in a country torn with dissensions, overrun by foreigners, and often persecuted and insulted by the adherents of an alien faith. (See an interesting article by Pandit Ram Chandra Shukla, "Nāgarī Prachārīnī Patrikā," vol. ix., pp. 209-210.)

desires and the innermost aspirations of the multitude, who, while sick of the horrors of the promiscuity of the atheistic, irresponsible, decadent Buddhism, with its extraordinary offshoots of Tāntric and Sahajia worship, were still not indifferent to the *joie de vivre* so long as it was consecrated by religion and made purer and more respectable.

“ Kāṇu Bhatta, a Buddhist scholar who lived in the latter part of the tenth century, was the first apostle of love-songs of the Sahajia cult in Bengali. This love is not a legitimate affair sanctioned by society ; with one's own wife it could not, according to this creed, reach a high stage of perfection.”*

The cult of the Sahajias found its greatest exponent in the Bengali poet Chandi Dās in the fourteenth century. Rai Bahadur Dinesh Chandra Sena rightly expounds in an eloquent passage the origin of this theory of attaining salvation through illicit love—in other words, the doctrine of the *Parakīyā Rasa*.

“ In this country a blind Providence joins the hands of a mute pair who promise fidelity, often without knowing each other. When the situation grows monotonous, losing colour and poetry, both men and women are treated to lectures on the purity of the nuptial vow, and to promises of rewards in the next world. They fully believe in the sanctity of marriage, and are ready to sacrifice sentiment to stern duty. But human passion cannot be altogether repressed, and where it overrides the ordinances of the Ṣāstras, it rushes forward with extraordinary strength, all the greater for the attempt at forcible suppression.”*

Chandi Dās and Vidyāpati were by no means the innovators, for they had been anticipated by Jayadeva,

* “ History of Bengali Language and Literature,” by Dinesh Chandra Sena, pp. 38, 117.

the author of the *Gīta Govinda*, in the eleventh century. The illicit love between Rādhā and Krishna was no doubt interpreted by scholars and philosophers in terms of symbolism. But a symbolism which rests on fundamentally incorrect and what are generally considered immoral relations is dangerous for the masses, the men of flesh and blood, and no amount of esoteric explanation or philosophic interpretation will diminish the quantum of blame attached to this pernicious doctrine, so far as its grosser results in art, literature, and in the life of the people are concerned. The consequences of moral laxity during the medieval period are writ large in the temples of Khajuraho, Bhuvaneshwara, and elsewhere. Even an author of the calibre of Jayadeva could not escape the all-pervading contagion, as is evidenced by the twelfth canto of his famous work.

Every phase of love was delineated, whether on the temple walls, or in the pages of Sanskrit poetry, or in the ballads sung by strolling minstrels or by womenfolk busy with their daily duties. A considerable mass of popular literature has survived, and it is curious to note that even the austere Jaina Sadhu poets wrote excellent verses on the joys of love and spring. Their earlier Rāsās are in the poetic style of *Vasanta Vilāsa*, and it would seem that the Bārā Māsā songs—songs depicting the various pleasures of love and also the agonies of separation peculiar to the well-defined months of the Indian seasons—came into special vogue after the tenth century A.D. There was, of course, nothing new about these songs except that they were in the spoken vernaculars of the people, and were probably meant to be sung rather than recited. From the earliest times it had been customary to deal at length with the peculiar

features of the seasons in all the Mahākāvya, and the famous masterpieces, such as the *Ṛitu Samhār* of Kālidāsa and *Amaru Shatakam* by the eighth-century poet—Sunār or goldsmith by caste—Amaru, no doubt furnished precedent and material for the later poets, especially of northern India, who toyed with the themes of seasonal love, of *Nāyaka Nāyikā-bheda*, *Rāgas*, and *Rāginis*, for wellnigh three centuries—almost up to the end of the eighteenth century. Rādhā and Krishna were the principal *dramatis personæ* in this vernacular extension of the old Sanskrit literature. The earliest vernacular Bārā Māsā poems may be said to be found in the Bengali—Dāker Vachana of *circa* tenth century and the somewhat later Gujarati Rāsās by Jaina writers.

It is also curious to note—a fact not generally known—that if the Hindus had the amours of Rādhā and Krishna as the principal theme of their songs, the Jains during the medieval period, at any rate in Gujarat during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, composed similar Bārā Māsa songs, celebrating the love of their twenty-second Tirthankar Nemināth with Rajīmatī, and the passion of Sthūlabhadra for the *danseuse* Koshā. Nemināth is associated in Jain theology with Krishna, of course, as the latter's superior, and the poignant story of his interrupted marriage with Rajīmatī occupies a whole chapter, Canto IX., in *Trīṣaṣṭishalākā Puruṣha-Charitam* of Hemachandra. The twelve years' romance of Sthūlabhadra with Koshā, the courtesan, is also told by Hemachandra in chapter xix. of his *Parishīṣṭa Parva*.

The seasonal songs constitute one of the principal items in the repertory of popular feminine music all over India even now, and especially so in Gujarat, where the

women of all classes enjoy a degree of freedom not generally known north of the Vindhya. Women in Gujarat sing these songs of love and separation, going round in rhythmic dance, on occasions of joy and festivities, and their Rāsas or Rāsdās, with their captivating airs, keeping time with the steps, begin the description of the year from the month of Kārtik, the opening month of the Vikrama calendar: "O my darling of the heart! You have departed on your journey, leaving me behind in this month of Kārtik, breaking the bonds of our love. O dear soul! our room is to me a veritable wilderness in the month of Māgshir, and how shall I, your servitor, get through the days all alone?" And so run the songs with the same somewhat melancholy air, vibrating to the inmost feelings of the singers, and echoing them with the slow and regular rhythm of feminine steps, describing, half recalling the intimate experiences of the life of love lived through various months and seasons of the year. As poetry and song, the ballads sung by the Gujarati women even at the present day occupy a unique place in the literature of folk-songs. The picture of these women singing and dancing is an unforgettable experience, and the only Indian picture which gives a glimpse of it, that I know of, is the famous Bagh fresco, showing the women moving round with little sticks in either hand, which together with the steps keep time with the lilt of the song. The fresco painters have, as it were, transferred a living scene of wonderful grace and enchantment from the life of Gujarat on the inaccessible walls of the caves at Bagh.* No other picture

* See "Bagh Caves" (1927), Plates D and E. Compare the description given in a poem of the seventeenth century, "Hira-Saubhāgyam," dealing with the life of the celebrated Jaina saint Hīravijaya Sūri.

"The women watching the fields are chanting melodies, songs of glory

of Rāsa or Rāsamandal—though the subject has been a favourite theme with Rajput painters—has caught the life and the rhythm of the actual scene as this old fresco, probably painted as an illustration in the life of the Buddha.

Besides these seasonal songs, called in Gujarati *Mahinā* (months), there are other songs born of a stricter literary tradition, meant to be read and recited by strolling minstrels or *chārāns* at the courts of princes, which are styled as Bārā Māsa songs. They, too, deal with the life of love, but begin it with the advent of the monsoon, the month of Āsādh: “The month of Āsādh has thundered and the peacock sung the Malār (Rāga characteristic of the rains). Rādhā remembers Mādhav, the lord of the Yadus and the universe. Lightning cleaves through the clouds and Rādhā cannot live without her lord.” If love—love of separation—forms the staple of these songs, sorrow consequent on the death of some beloved one also furnishes a theme for recalling the departed in lines of true and adequately expressed feeling.* These songs, as would be expected, though of uncertain age, are of great assistance in giving us the very bloom of the bygone days.

This somewhat long digression is intended to focus the arts of sculpture and painting in their perspective to the religion, thought, and literature of the period. It is to be noted that the poem *Vasanta Vilāsa*, though similar in style to the Rāsās of the Jaina poets, is un-

of Gujarat, which surpasses all other regions by its prosperity, keeping time with their hands, giving *tālīs*.” (See “Gujarāti Purātatva,” vol. v., p. 103.)

* I am indebted in this matter to an article by Zaver-Chand Meghāni in the Gujarati magazine, *Prasthāna* (*Āshādha*), 1983 Samvat, v. 5.

doubtedly the work of a non-Jaina, most probably of a Vaishnava poet. There is nothing Jaina either about the poem or the illustrations thereto. The entire poem consists of eighty-six Gujarāṭi verses. The Sanskrit and Prākṛit verses, which also number eighty-six, are merely there as quotations, more or less similar in sentiment, from the old classic literature. They have nothing to do either with the continuity of the Gujarāṭi poem or the themes of the illustrations. A brief summary of the contents of the Gujarāṭi poem is given to convey a more exact idea of the subject-matter of the MS. and also of its illustrations. Verses 2-9 prepare the ground, as it were, by a general description of the passing away of the monsoon and the advent of spring. Verses 11-27 deal with the animated world of nature, especially the bees and the koel, who are once again busy making their peculiar music. Verses 28-35 describe the vernal flowers in bloom :

“The mango is in bloom, with a line of bees around it, which makes the lovers (who are separated) give vent to sighs even as the smoke of burning hearts” (verse 33).

Verses 36-45 deal with the miseries of a *virahinī* *Nāyikā*, a lady whose lover is away. The description is diversified by the usual appeals to the moon and to the bee. Verses 46-49 deal with the omen, and it is curious to note that the appearance of a crow on a tree is considered and welcomed as a sign of good fortune. The upper portion of Plate VII. in my book illustrates this scene. There the lady is welcoming the crow seated amidst the branches of a mango tree. The meeting of the lovers is described in verses 50-54. Verses 55-68 describe the beauty of the various feminine limbs, and verses 69-71 deal with the enjoyment of the lovers.

Verses 72-85 are what are called in Sanskrit *Anyokti*—lines addressed to the flowers and to the bees not to be too conceited about their good fortune. The last verse, No. 86, ends the poem, saying :

“ Thus do lovers please one another by pleasant words, and blessed are those men of discrimination who recite the poem of *Vasanta Vilāsa*.”

An analysis of the Sanskrit verses may be also interesting. There are but three Prākṛit verses from the celebrated play *Karpūra-manjari* by Rāja-shekhara (*circa* A.D. 900). Out of a total of eighty-six Sanskrit and Prākṛit verses, thirty-two have been noted by Professor Dhruva as being quotations as follows :

Naishadhīya, i. 80, 84, 86, 89, 101 ; ii. 8, 24, 27, 32, 95 ; *Shishupāla-vadham*, vi. 7, 16, 20 ; *Kumāra Sambhavam*, i. 35 and ii. 34 ; *Shakuntalā*, i. 20, ii. 1, and iii. 3 ; *Prabodh-chandrodaya*, i. 1 ; *Subhashita-ratna-bhāndāgāram*, 755, 1116, 1688, 1946, 2135, 2228, 2797. Besides these there are three verses from Amaru Shatakam. The rest of the verses have not been traced to their original sources. It should be noted that the number of Sanskrit verses in our MS. is only seventy-six. The last Sanskrit verse is :

“ The wise spend their time in the enjoyment of song and Shāshtras, while the foolish spend their time in intoxication, sleep, or quarrels.”

I now propose to describe the various pictures of the manuscript in some detail, even at the risk of being tedious, for it is not at present possible to reproduce it in its entirety, and there is no other pictorial document which gives us a detailed view of the life and habits of the people in Western India in the fifteenth century.

The first six verses of the MS., together with the

pictures thereof, have totally disappeared. The MS. begins with a picture in which only the outlines of a man and woman with a cobra behind the latter and the plantain shrub with birds behind the former are to be seen.

The second picture shows the lovers in embrace in a beautiful hall hung with coloured curtains. Outside the hall is a maid-servant holding a horse, indicating probably the recent arrival of the hero.

Picture No. 3 shows a lady offering a water-jar to her lover, followed by two women behind. It should be noted that all the personages of this picture have a halo. It is impossible to make out any relation between the picture or the meaning thereof and its connection with the Gujarati verse. The connection between the verse and the illustration is evident in the very badly damaged picture No. 4, in which the lovers are seen entering a tank, the construction of which is clearly shown by the regular brickwork surrounding the water.

The fifth picture is perfectly clear, and shows the lovers seated in a broad swing suspended with golden ropes, as is described in the verse above the picture. Two maid-servants are pushing the swing, which is suspended from a pair of trees bent, as it were, over the heads of the lovers in a feeling of affection. A pair of bees, large and prominent, are floating above. The swing has continued to be the characteristic feature of Gujarati households up to the present day.

The sixth picture shows an empty bed with a flowered bedstead, with a man and a woman completely nude picking up their clothes on the left and right respectively. The lady is decked with elaborate necklaces and has a *venī*, the knitted braid of hair falling below the knees.

An ornate canopy worked in blue with three pairs of triple chains is shown just over the bed. The picture has no connection with the verse. The man wears a beard, the Vaishṇava tilak—a pair of parallel lines in red joined at the lower end on the forehead—and flowers in his hair. The figure is of a broad-chested person somewhat indifferently moulded. The wooden bedstead is a piece of elaborate workmanship.

Picture No. 7 is in a poetic mood. On the left is a tank with a pair of probably *molsiri* trees with a pair of bees humming; a couple of water-ducks are disporting themselves in the blue waters of the tank, while a crane is nibbling the lotus bud growing near the tank. Four lotus blooms are shown with the same number of bees floating round them. On the right of the pond is the lady dressed in a “new” style, with a flower bud in her left hand; a coconut palm with a monkey climbing up towards the bunch of fruits is prominently shown, along with another tree, probably a mango tree, with bees in front.

The next picture (No. 8)† cannot be related to any of the verses in the MS. A pair of lovers with haloes are seated on a bedstead with maid-servants offering cups, probably of wine. These, too, have the radiant arches round their heads. The picture probably depicts the gods in heaven tasting the joys of spring.

It seems as if the first scene is over at this stage, for below the picture at the end of the Sanskrit verses is the usual benediction :

Shubham bhavatu ; kalyāṇa mastu ; chha chha . . .

The second stage begins with an animated picture (No. 9) showing the lovers in actual embrace. The man

and woman are seen entering the room from left and right respectively. The discarding of the clothes is suggested by the passionate scene depicted in the centre. On a shelf in the upper portion of the room are shown three flasks, probably of wine. The picture is frankly sensual.

It is immediately followed by half a dozen women engaged in graceful dance amidst a setting of *molsiri* trees and humming bees. The poem says that the beautiful damsels are disporting themselves even as the gods in heaven (picture No. 10).

Picture No. 11 shows a man with a blue halo and a Vaishṇava tilak holding in either hand a bunch of flowers, with a female servant in the foreground. A mango, a *molsiri*, and a plantain tree fill up the space.

Picture No. 12 is somewhat curious, and shows Vishnu with four arms wearing the Vaishṇava mark. A man with a flower bloom followed by his spouse is seen bowing to the god. The couple probably represent Kāmadeva and Rati. Two maid-servants are cleverly depicted with the fly-whisks behind the god. Needless to say, there is no connection between the poem and the illustration.

Picture No. 13 shows the god of Love elaborately dressed, bearded, haloed, and holding a lotus stalk in his left hand. In front is his wife, also elaborately dressed and wearing a *mukuta* like the god himself. A pair of does are shown between the trees just in the rear.

Picture No. 14 shows the sun just coming out of the clouds, and one of the women is seen just shaking off the morning lassitude. A black buck is seen tied to a *molsiri* tree, with birds in the branches. Two ladies are engaged in conversation, one in the centre holding a

musical instrument, while the bees are humming overhead.

The picture following (No. 15) is in two parts. A man is seen reclining on the ground under a tree with his lady love fanning herself with a plantain leaf. There does not seem to be any meaning in the blue haloes surrounding these lovers. On the right-hand portion of the plate is seen a lady receiving a drink offered by her servant.

Picture No. 16 shows the man lying below a *molsiri* tree. I should perhaps note that it is not always easy to distinguish between a *molsiri* and a mango tree in the pictures. An enormous squirrel is seen going up the tree. A coconut palm is in front, while a highly decorated tree with fruits and birds fills up the right-hand space of the picture. The picture is intended to show the miseries of a separated lover, for we see the lovers united in the picture No. 17. On either side of the lovers is a maid-servant—one offering a drink and another holding a parrot in her right hand. The scene of the lovers' meeting is by the side of a plantain tree.

Picture No. 18 shows a solitary figure of a man in the forests with a number of trees shown in detail. The nature of the jungle is indicated by the pursuit of a hare by a tiger.

Picture No. 19 shows the lovers in a frivolous mood. The couple are seated on a bedstead with a blue covering. On the right is a maid-servant looking at herself in a mirror held in her left hand, with a musical instrument in her right hand. A servant on the left is seen offering something which looks like leaves. The lady on the bed is offering *pān* to her lover.

Picture No. 20 shows the god of Love shooting his flowery shaft. Curiously enough, neither he nor his wife

have haloes, though the god of Love wears a beard, as do all the male figures except God Vishṇu in our picture roll. Bees are shown amidst the *molsiri* trees, while a couple of maid-servants are offering lotus flowers and a drink. The figure of Madana is well drawn.

Picture No. 21 shows two women friends in conversation, with a female servant in the background.

Picture No. 22 ‡ shows in a corner on the left an enormous peacock stretching out his feathers in full before his admiring mate. The lover is coaxing his partner to the bed-chamber on the right.

Picture No. 23: We are again face to face with the god of Love wearing angular *mukuta* and elaborate haloes. A solitary doe is gazing at the divine pair. The picture following (No. 24) shows a tank with fish prettily swimming in the blue waters, with large lotus buds growing near the banks. Two women friends are apparently talking under the shade of a tree by the tank, with the inevitable bees hovering above.

Picture No. 25 shows the lover entertained by his mistress with music. A palm, a *molsiri*, and a plantain tree with a peacock below and bees and birds overhead fill up the scene.

Picture No. 26 ‡ is extremely interesting, for a flock of deer—two does and a male—are being chased by a tiger. A couple of frightened rabbits are running in the opposite direction. The various animals are shown with considerable movement leaping over the stony ground indicated by blue prominences, with straight lines indicating the shrubby growth. Five trees are shown in parallel lines, of which only the second and the fifth can be confidently identified as a coconut palm and a mango tree. A solitary bee is also floating below the mango tree. The picture

is quite interesting, and probably shows more than anything else the close relationship between the popular miniature painting of the fifteenth century and the earlier fresco painting. The whole scene is rendered against a red background.

With picture No. 27 the second scene would seem to come to an end. The god of Love is shown astride a horse with blue and red spots, with a quiver of flower-tipped arrows slung on his left. A pair of deer are shown in front of the horse and a peacock behind. The scene is laid amidst two pairs of *molsiri* trees picked out against a background of yellow.

The new scene opens with two women friends in conversation. A bird is picking at a pomegranate on the right, and a peacock is shown on the left. The pomegranate fruit is quite realistically rendered (picture No. 28).

Picture No. 29 shows a pair of monkeys climbing up a coconut palm, while a lady is seen talking to her servant, holding a parrot in her right arm and a musical instrument in the left, and the hero is seen arriving holding a plantain bloom. The picture following (No. 30) is curiously enough laid between two palm trees, showing two women standing on what appears to be a sort of blue cloth.

In picture No. 31 is shown a lady inside a room talking to her servant, obviously about her miseries on account of the separation from her lover. Outside in the garden a peacock is displaying his charms to his mate, while just behind is shown a tiger tearing out the entrails of a black buck under a *molsiri* tree.

Picture No. 32 is a comparatively large panel, measuring $5\frac{1}{2}$ by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Two male figures, probably gods,

judging from the nimbus round their heads, are shown outside the courtyard talking to each other. They are dressed in *dhoti*, with another *dhoti* or *dupatta* falling across the shoulders. Both are wearing *mukuta* and the usual ornaments of the ears, the neck, and the arms, besides the anklets around the feet. The hair is gathered at the back in a knot. Overhead is a canopy with the design of the ducks or the geese in the old Ceylonese fashion, which also appear in the canopy over the bed on the left-hand corner. Here the bed, or perhaps the settee—for there are no cushions and the covering is of check pattern worked in blue—is empty, while the lady with a nimbus, a *mukuta*, and a *choli* in green, is lying on the ground with legs crossed. The arrangement of the left half of the picture is absolutely flat, and the figure of the lady occupies a third of the picture, and to indicate the situation of the settee a line in yellow is drawn between the two figures. I cannot relate the subject-matter of the picture to anything in the poem.

The following picture (No. 33) shows a lady seated on a square-cushioned seat outside the room in the garden. A solitary bee is humming overhead, a monkey is climbing a palm in the distance, a pair of koels and also the lucky crow are seated on the branches of a tree in front, with a large squirrel crawling up and a crane walking below. Inside the room is a bed with a blue cover, red cushions, and a red canopy with *torans* (hangings) overhead; a jug of water and some utensils with leaves are seen below the bedstead.

Picture No. 34 is that of a *Māninī* described on p. 26 of my book.

Picture No. 35† shows two women friends talking in

an attitude of ease inside a room, with two male figures conversing outside.

Picture No. 36 ‡ obviously illustrates the lady lying on a beautiful bedstead looking at the moon just coming out of the clouds. A maid-servant is offering some drink in a blue cup of good design. A tame doe is shown chewing something under a plantain tree.

Picture No. 37 shows two women of the upper regions wearing the usual blue haloes, with braided hair hanging down. A tiger has just caught a flying doe. The animals are very clumsily rendered.

Picture No. 38 ‡ illustrates the meeting of the *nāyikā* and her friend. On the left is a pair of buck and on the right a pair of tame rabbits. The scene is laid between a coconut palm and a *molsiri* tree, with the pomegranate in the rear. The subject-matter of the picture is described by verse 45 in the MS., which says :

“Friend, tell me about my beloved, for I can in no wise get through the night. Love is painful and my heart is restless.”

The chapter here apparently comes to an end.

The opening picture (No. 39) of the new scene shows the distressed lady, naked from below the waist, sitting on the bed with the support of her lady friend. Another friend is just raising her up from the front. A lady in the right-hand corner is arranging her hair by looking at a mirror held by one of the servants. The picture is rather good, but, unfortunately, difficult to reproduce.

There is nothing particular to note about picture No. 40.

Picture No. 41 is noticeable on account of a pair of monkeys in the act of coitus, while the two lady friends are talking to each other under a *molsiri* tree.

Picture No. 42 shows the offering to the crow, and is reproduced in p. 7 of my book. It should be noted that the figure of the lady has a blue nimbus, which is in this MS. reserved generally for divine personages.

The picture No. 43 is also shown in the lower portion of Plate VII. of my book, and suggests by the seated figure of the camel the recent arrival of the lover. The consummation of the meeting of the lovers is depicted in the picture following (No. 44), wherein the lovers are seen embracing each other outside the room in the left-hand corner. Their more intimate meeting is shown in the centre of the picture with their clothes hanging on a peg made of deer-head. A woman-servant is shown standing outside the room. The subject-matter is practically the same of pictures Nos. 45 and 46. Both pictures are realistic and obscene.

Picture No. 47 has nothing noticeable about it. The scene apparently closes and a new scene begins with a picture of a divine pair seated on a bed with a maid-servant on either side (No. 48).†

Picture No. 49‡ is very well preserved and quite prettily executed. Two pairs of bees are humming aloft; two women friends, with braids of hair hanging down like snakes, are talking to each other. One of them is feeding the parrot carried by the other on her fingers. On the left the lovers are conversing together. The picture following is frankly obscene (picture No. 50).

Picture No. 51‡ shows the lovers in conversation attended by female servants offering something which looks like lotus stalks in a blue utensil. The right-hand half of the picture (No. 52) shows the lovers in embrace, more in the style of the later indecent pictures illustrating the Kāmashashtra or of the medieval temple sculptures.

The scene on the left is strikingly different: a lady standing by the side of a tank playing on a *tānpurā* or a *silār*; a bee is hovering above a lotus stalk which has just been plucked by the lady; and fish are seen gaily swimming in the blue waters of the tank.

Picture No. 53 shows the divine pair and has nothing particular about it. The picture following (No. 54) is obscene so far as the right half is concerned. On the left is shown a lady arranging her earrings by looking at herself in a mirror. A maid-servant is standing with something in her hands. The picture following (No. 55) shows a quiet scene, in which a parrot is nibbling at a pomegranate fruit, with a pair of animals which look like jackals under a *molsiri* tree, while a maid-servant is putting the vermilion mark on the forehead of her mistress. There is nothing particularly interesting about the picture following (No. 56).

The left half of picture No. 57 is especially interesting, for it shows a lady playing on a *tānpurā*, with a pair of deer in front with a couple of *molsiri* trees in the rear. By itself the picture would pass as a version of the Rāginī Todī,* and it is just possible that we have here one of the prototypes of the Rāginī pictures, which, as is known, did not come into being till about the sixteenth century. The right half of the picture has nothing remarkable except its frank sensuality.

* See Plate VI., Coomaraswamy's Rajput Paintings, Boston Catalogue, Part V.

Todī is a Rāginī to be sung on a winter noon, as Hindol is a Rāginī for the spring. The following verses from the Rāga Ratnākar of Deva, perhaps the most eminent Hindi poet who wrote on the subject, will be found interesting as specimens of poetic visualization of the melodies:

"She with the eyes of a fawn and a *binā* in the hand sings, infatuating the deer. Todī of golden hue is a complete Rāginī sung on winter noons."

Picture No. 58 ‡ shows two women friends with a musical instrument each. One of them on the right is playing on it, while the other, in addition to the *tānpurā*, holds a lotus bud. A squirrel is going up the tree with a crane in the rear. Between a *molsiri* tree with green leaves and red blossoms and a palm tree is shown a pair of tigers in an affectionate attitude. The picture (No. 59) following is remarkable for an equine couple between two *molsiri* trees, while a lover is just about to leave his mistress. A maid-servant with a white upper garment and a red *choli* holds a parrot in her right arm. The whole picture is picked out against a yellow background. The parrot again appears in the next picture (No. 60) in the hands of the maid-servant. The lovers are seated on blue-cushioned seats, holding something which I cannot identify.

Picture No. 61 ‡ shows a complicated forest scene with a jackal, a buck, a rabbit, and other animals indifferently drawn, with trees and grass shown conventionally. The lover is apparently fastening a necklace round the neck of his mistress. A peacock is shown under a plantain shrub just to fill up the space.

Picture No. 62 ‡ is a good specimen of a divine pair, in which the lady is playing on the *tānpurā*, the stem of which is painted black. A maid-servant, also with a halo, is offering what may be lotus stalks. Another maid-servant, holding a parrot, is standing behind the god.

Picture No. 63 is a sensual scene, showing the lovers on the bed. The parrot in the right hand of the maid, and unlike other parrots in the MS., is particularly large, probably a Zanzibar variety, and is realistically painted.

Picture No. 64 ‡ is of special interest, for the two lovers are swinging on separate swings suspended one from

a *molsiri* and another from a similar but unidentifiable tree. On either side of the trees is a maid-servant holding the lotus bud, with bees humming overhead. The picture may well be a prototype of Rāga Hindol.*

There is nothing remarkable about the next three pictures (Nos. 65, 66, and 67).

Picture No. 68 shows between three *molsiri* trees two women with floating draperies painted with taste and vigour. The inevitable bees are also there. The picture, though small (measuring only $3\frac{1}{2}$ by 8 inches), is one of the very best from purely an æsthetic standpoint. The verse below the picture says :

“ The bee has forgotten in this season of spring the scentless bloom of the *mālali* creeper in its infatuation for the *borasali* blossom.”

The picture is obviously meant to illustrate the verse. The following pictures (Nos. 69, 70, 71, 72, and 73) have nothing particularly noteworthy about them.

Picture No. 74 shows the lovers enjoying themselves between a pair of *molsiri* trees, with a maid-servant offering some drink and a pair of bees overhead. The figures are picked out against a background of yellow. The following two pictures (Nos. 75 and 76) do not require any special description.

Picture No. 77 † shows in the right half a man stretching himself on a bed in an attitude of contemplation, holding a lotus stem in the left hand. In the left half of the picture are shown two women friends conversing together as if to illustrate the concluding verse of the MS. :

* Rāga Hindol is described by Deva as follows : “ The man, fair of limbs and dressed in yellow raiment, swings with his beauty heightened by the grace of Providence.”

“Men of discrimination spend their time in the pleasures of song and Shāstrās.”

The pictorial roll is concluded by a decorative plate showing a conventional tree with monkeys in the branches and a pair of horses separately drawn on the left.

From the details given above it will be observed that some of the pictures are at any rate genuine illustrations of, and closely related to, the verses of the poem, though for the most part the pictures bear but little relation to the literary text, and this was inevitable from the nature of the poem itself, which is for the most part occupied with general descriptions of feminine charms, the floral wealth of the spring, and the pangs of separated lovers. It is curious to note that seasonal pictures are not peculiar to Indian art only. They are common in the medieval art of Europe, especially in the form of magnificent tapestries depicting the seasons, which can be seen at their best in the national museum at Florence. There is, however, this difference between the European and the Indian pictures, that while the former suggests the seasons by their climatic and occupational characteristics, the latter interpret them in terms of love between man and woman. In other words, seasons are depicted carefully and realistically by the Western artist, while the Indian painter is only concerned with the imaginative rendering—poetical transmutations of the periodic changes of weather. The same distinction will be noticed even in the literary treatment of the same theme. The contrast between a book such as Thomson's “Seasons” and the Bārā Māsa compositions by any of the classical Hindi writers will be obvious and fundamental. The difference in treatment is at bottom one of outlook and ideals, and unless this is constantly remembered, it is

bound to vitiate the proper estimation of relative art values.

It must not, however, be thought that the Indian artist clothed everything that he found with the raiment of imagination and idealism, and that his Western *confrère* was left with the earthy soil of the material world. For instance, the treatment of sex, or rather the sexual life of man and woman, is one theme in Indian art which gives rise to some baffling problems. It would seem that eroticism of the crudest type appealed to the Indian artist, to one who thought and painted even seasons and songs in terms of poetry. On the one hand, while we find definite reluctance for portraying the nude, on the other hand there is an unaccountable and irrepressible attempt to deal with the most intimate relations of man and woman in terms of grossest and often indiscriminate realism. This antinomy has been a characteristic feature of Indian art from its very beginning. Whether we are looking at the early erotic bas-reliefs of Bādāmi, or the magnificent friezes of Mahābalipuram, or the lewd medieval sculptures of Bhuvaneshwara or of Khajuraho, the same disconcerting question persists, as to how artists who were capable of conceiving figures such as those of Buddha, Natarāja, Sundar Mūrti Swāmī, the Ajanta Avalokiteshvara, and countless others, failed utterly and miserably to rise above the level of depicting the intimacy of the sexes in its obvious and also its relatively unimportant aspect. It is for this reason that Indian sculpture and painting, when they deal with this subject, are often interesting only as obscenities and are rarely of any outstanding æsthetic merit. No amount of "symbolic" interpretation can explain away the amazing grossness of the sculptured walls of the Khajuraho or Bhuvaneshvara

temples and the unabashed pornography of the so-called pictures of Kāma Shāstra, and some amount even of the literary products of some of our greatest writers, such as the concluding cantos of the *Kumāra Sambhava* attributed to Kālidās, the closing scene in the *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva, and generally in the works of a good many of the classical Hindi writers, always with the exception of Tulsidas, who dealt with the detailed love-making of Krishna and Rādhā. In fact, this realism is perhaps due to the fact that India produced at an early age works of such undoubted scientific value as the Kāmashāstra of Vātsāyana, which dominated the sexual thought just as definitely and profoundly as did the Upanishads in the realm of philosophy and the Nāṭyashāstra of Bharata in the domain of poetry and dramaturgy. In other words, sex was perceived, not through the usual tinted glasses of imagination, but with the eyes of everyday experience, and consequently the utter inadequacy of achievement—whether poetic, plastic, or pictorial—is so obvious. The pictures in the *Vasanta Vilāsa* are no exception. In fact, it is surprising that pictures depicting animals and human beings engaged in the act of coitus should have been necessary when the poetical text does not require them, and particularly when the MS. was copied and illustrated for “educative” purposes. It should be mentioned that while the Gujarati poem is free from anything obscene, the collection of Sanskrit verses is not so, for unmitigated sensualism in art and poetry was a legacy from the days of the classical culture, and that the tendency of the medieval saints and reformers was generally towards greater purity and puritanism. It is also noteworthy that sensualism has never been tolerated under any guise within the domains of art and literature.

patronized and inspired by the followers of Jainism. This is one of the reasons which goes to prove that the characteristic features of the paintings of the *Vasanta Vilāsa* which are found and have hitherto been chiefly studied in MSS. of Jaina libraries and Jaina religion* have nothing at all to do with Jainism, but are common to a folk-art prevalent in Western India from the eleventh century onwards. In fact, we have still in the collection of the late Mr. Purushottam Vishram Maoji, of Bombay, pictures painted on stucco of the fifteenth century which formed part of interior decoration in the houses of that period, which exhibit the same features of simple colour-schemes, angular faces, eyes drawn out to the ears, eyebrows in simple curves, and a certain indifference to elegance, and careful, refined, and finished workmanship, as are found in the medieval Kalpa Sūtras. The pointed nose, so striking in pictures of this school, is equally evident in the frescoes of the Ellora caves, and though the æsthetic quality of the latter cannot be compared with that of the former, the resemblance may not be altogether fortuitous, for the painters of Lāṭa, as of Kosala,† were renowned

* It should be noted that the capital of Gujarat was transferred from Anhilpur Pātan to Ahmedabad by the new Muslim rulers in A.D. 1412, and this was also the time when the custom of having religious MSS. copied and illustrated regardless of expenditure became widely prevalent among the Jains. For instance, a millionaire of Māndavagarh (Māndu), Sangrām Soni, in A.D. 1436 is said to have spent 208,000 gold coins in having illuminated and illustrated copies of Kalpa Sutra and Kālkāchārya-Kathāṅkam. This was also the time when the Jaina Sadhus got their rich laity to establish the famous bhāṇḍārs or libraries—e.g., Jina-bhadra Sūri founded (circa 1418-1458) the famous libraries of Jaislmer, Jhalor, Daulatabad, Nagor, Mandu, Ahmedabad, Khambhat, and Pātan—at least half of which have survived up to the present day. This is the principal reason why so many and so good Kalpa Sutras of the period are available.

† See "Manimekhalai," p. 53.

for their skill all throughout the country, and it is possible that they may have had a share in these frescoes of Ellora.*

In that great picture of Bagh (Plates D and E, "Bagh Caves"), depicting a music party, is to be observed a typical scene from the life of modern Gujarat. Nowhere else in India are women to be seen going round in a dance, keeping time with small sticks (*dāndiā*) held in either hand. The peculiarity of this dance, or *Rāsda* as it is called in Gujarati, is that the women sing while they dance. The Bagh picture is absolutely unique in the pictorial history of India, as is Gujarat unique in its preservation of an old rite and custom chiefly observed during the Navarātra festival at the end of the monsoon. The reputation of the school of the ancient West, which had survived even to the time of the Tibetan historian Tārānāth in the fifteenth century, may well have been founded on the skill of the painters who carried on the traditions of fresco paintings at Ellora, Bagh, and elsewhere. The large earrings and the floral decorations of the dancing women in the Bagh fresco are also noteworthy, for these are precisely the features of the Gujaratis which excited ridicule from the Indians in other parts of the country. It is also noteworthy that, according to Sangīta Ratnākara, Pārvati, the consort of Shiva, taught the art of dancing to Uśhā, the daughter of Bāṇa. The latter taught it to the milkmaids of Dwārakā, and these in their turn instructed the maids of Saurāstra, who spread it by instructing the womenfolk of other lands (verses 7 and 8, Chapter VII.).†

* *Vide* Rūpam, April, 1926, "Preliminary Notes on Some Early Paintings at Ellora," by D. V. Thompson, pp. 45-49.

† Cf. "Chaturbhāni," p. 20. The author of this burlesque ridicules the residents of Lāṭa in various ways throughout.

There are some characteristic features about the paintings of *Vasanta Vilāsa* which are unknown either before or after. The ubiquitous black bee has already been noted. Among the trees, the fondness for the various kinds of palm—cocoanut, *khajur*, and *tāri*—and also for the *molsiri* and the plantain tree, is striking. Even the mango tree does not play as much part as the three trees cited above,* and I have not seen the *molsiri* tree anywhere else. The present neighbourhood of Ahmedabad is not remarkable for its arboreal wealth, and the various kinds of palms and mangoes still form the most conspicuous features of the landscape. The peacock, the squirrel, and the monkey are also typical, though only the red-faced variety of the latter is found in the MS. The deer and the tiger are at any rate at present conspicuous by their rarity, and it is perhaps on account of this that they are invariably poorly drawn. The crow plays the part of a harbinger of good fortune, which is unique in Indian painting. The parrot is the bird which is most frequently represented, and its popularity is attested by the prominence given to it in old Gujarati folklore.

Gujarat is even at present not remarkable either for its gardens or for its wild animals, and its poverty in these respects is also reflected in this pictorial roll of the fifteenth century, especially when compared with the later Rajput paintings, especially of the Kāngrā and the Garhwāli schools. Here are no winding streams nor trailing creepers nor the magnificent flowers of the Himālayas. Water, whenever it occurs, is that of small

* Cf. the beautiful coloured frontispiece of Dr. Coomaraswamy's "Catalogue of Indian Collections," Part V., Rajput Paintings; also note on p. 86.

tanks. Flowers are almost completely absent, and the jungle is generally bare of large and shady trees. The scenes of love are therefore enacted generally by the side of the palm, the plantain, and the *molsiri* tree. Lotus stalks with large buds are a favourite bouquet, as is the *tamburā* as a musical instrument. The lotus leaves and lotus buds are found in almost every picture.

Red and blue curtains and large elaborately worked bedsteads, with a water-jug—a bowl with leaves and flowers underneath—are characteristics of the medieval household of Gujarat. The triple hangings from the ceilings are also typical. The people—men and women—are fond of striped or flowered dresses. Women wear blue, red, or green close-fitting *cholis*, coming right down to the waist and covering the entire arm. The fashion seems to have considerably changed in the next hundred years.* Men and women both used flowers as a decoration to the hair. I should also note that divinities are painted with *mukuṭas*, while ordinary menfolk are represented bareheaded. The presence of the hand-mirror with blue tassels is also noteworthy. Curiously enough, the swing—the most characteristic and universal feature of the Gujarati household—occurs but twice in the MS.

The most striking thing about the costume of the people is not the dress of the woman, but the vanity of the man, for besides flowered *dhotis* and *dupattās* and elaborate necklaces, star-shaped earrings, tight anklets, not to speak of bracelets and the *kadā* just over the elbow, he with his moustache and beard, and his body bare above the waist, is seen carefully gathering his hair in a knot behind, decked with lotus buds and flowers. Even

* See Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

allowing for the mood of gaiety excusable in the month of Phālgun and at the advent of the spring, the Gujarati gentleman of the fifteenth century must have looked a veritable popinjay—absurd and ridiculous. No wonder that a medieval burlesque describes the residents of Lāṭa as not very different from the devils and the Saurāstrikās barbarous as the apes.* They, however, had a reputation for being good sculptors and painters. Their irrepressible love of painting is humorously described in the same work as follows :

“Here is he painting the banner of the temple of Pradyumna=the god of Love. Lo ! this sheer *dindishness*. *Dindins* by name are they, not much superior to monkeys. Why again, oh ! his love for the *Dindikās* ? The *Dindins* are truly spoiling the painting with their own daubs, putting the ink-filth of their hair-brushes on the whitewashed building ; taking their (misshaped) iron tool with very keen edges, they are roaming round the palace grounds, active like vermin.”†

The Kathā-Sarit-sāgara by Somadeva also describes Lāṭa as the very home of arts.‡ In other words, it would appear that the painters of Lāṭa were as much noted

* Pp. 16 and 38 of “Pāda-Tāditakam,” by Shyāmila (Chaturbhāṇi), published by D. G. Sarma and Krishna, Bagarganj, Patna. The large earrings and the braid of hair worn by Gujaratis appear to have amused outsiders even then. Cf. p. 20.

† See my article in the *Bihar-Orissa Research Society Journal*, vol. i., pp. 498-502, on the “Pictorial Motif in Ancient Indian Literature.”

‡ Taranga 74, “Shashāṅkavati Lambaka,” story of Bhīma-bhatta and Samarabhatta. I have noted several interesting references in this charming “Ocean of Stories.” References to wall-paintings, paintings on cloth, picture albums, picture exhibitions in a monastery, pictorial competitions abound throughout the book. The whole of “Rāma-Charita” is said to have been painted on the palace walls in Ujjain (Taranga 16, “Lāvaṇaka Lambaka”).

Reference is also found to the sculptural fame of Vardhamānapuri (modern Wadhvān in Kāthiawār).

as the artisans of the Tamil country—the jewellers of Magadha, the smiths of Mahārāshtra, the blacksmiths of Avanti, and the carpenters of Yavana.*

I have already mentioned that in pictures 57 and 64 we have the early prototypes of the Rāginī pictures which became so fashionable in the seventeenth and especially in the eighteenth century wherever Hindu art was flourishing, with the curious exception of the Punjab, for no melody-pictures of the Kāngrā school have yet been known. It has been known to students of Sanskrit that each of the seven notes of Indian music has been endowed not only with its distinctive colour, but also with its dominant Rasa.†

The following quotation from Mr. De's "Sanskrit Poetics," vol. ii, p. 344, will be found interesting :

"It should also be noted that a special colour and a presiding deity is attributed to each *rasa*. Thus, red, black, white, dark (*syāma*), and grey are associated, not unreasonably, with the furious, terrible, comic, erotic, and pathetic sentiments, although it is difficult to explain why horror is dark blue (*nilā*), wonder is orange, and heroism is yellow. The respective deities are Vishnu (erotic), Yama (pathetic), Pramatha (comic), Rudra (furious), Indra (heroic), Kāla (terrible), Mahākāla (disgustful),

* See p. 159, "Manimekhalai," translated by Professor Krishnaswami Aiyangar, a work of *circa* sixth century.

I mentioned on p. 25 of my book the name of Arjuna, painter, having been mentioned as the author of a series of Rama pictures. Professor Dhruva calls my attention to the fact that the painter's name is not mentioned in some editions of the "Uttara Rāmacharita." The edition consulted by me is that published by the Nirṇaya Sāgar Press in 1915, p. 20.

† Cf. "Sangita Makaranda," *circa* seventh to eleventh century (No. XVI., Gaekwad Oriental Series, pp. 4-5). Bharata's "Nāṭya-shastra" has similar ideas (ch. xix., verses 38, 39, p. 221, Chaukhamba edition).

Brahmā (the marvellous). Visvanātha adds that Nārāyaṇa is the presiding deity of *Śānta rasa* and the colour associated is that of jasmin (kunda).”*

It is noteworthy that the pictorial conception of the *rāga* is unknown to old Sanskrit works on music, and it is more than probable that the pictures of *rāga* and *rāginī* were a part of the pictorial movement which followed in the wake of the popular revival of Vaisṇavism and the cult of Rādhā and Krishna. In other words, the melody pictures were developed in connection with the interpretation of the various types of heroes and heroines. It is to be noted that the two dominant themes of all the *rāga* and *rāginī* pictures are generally only two—viz., love and religion. The melody pictures, in fact, do not constitute such an original departure in the pictorial tradition as is sometimes thought, for very few of them exhibit real originality and strength of imagination; such as the pictorial versions of *rāginī* Āsāwari, Todi, Rāga Dīpaka, and a few others. The bulk of them are only different versions of the perennial themes of heroes and heroines and the seasons; for every *rāga* and every *rāginī* are definitely related by ancient prescription to seasons and also to the different times of the day.

The end of the Hindu hegemony and the rise of the Musulmans were signalized, especially towards the fourteenth and the fifteenth century, by a popular upheaval which affected every sphere of life. Its significance is not even now fully appreciated, for the reactions of it

* These ancient prescriptions regarding the use of various colours do not appear to have been rigorously followed by the artists. The fact is, however, that nobody has yet made a serious attempt to study Hindu painting from this particular standpoint of the relationship between the *Rasas* and the colours.

were scattered over an extensive area, socially and geographically. The days of mahākāvyas, of epics, had gone. It was an age of scholasticism in the realm of literature, which culminated later in the beautiful lyrical poetry of Chandidās, Vidyāpati, Sūrdās, and others. There was now no scope for grandiose sculpture and elaborate fresco paintings, for it was a time of popular resurgence and democratization of culture; of elaboration of details, rather than of elemental conceptions. The great monuments of the period at Belur, Halebid, Ābu, Khajuraho, Bhuvaneshwara all testify to this common feature of the age. Miniature painting was therefore not an accident, but a logical extension of the culture which was now becoming the property of the masses through the cultivation of the vernaculars—the spoken tongues of the people. If it was a decline, it was perhaps inevitable; for the standards of the royal excavations of Ellora (and perhaps of Ajantā as well) and Mahabalipuram could not be maintained by the *bourgeoisie*, whose hall-mark all the world over is a certain quality of drabness. And this is evident in the most magnificent of the Kalpa Sutras and other pictorial remains that have survived. The miniature painting of the pre-Mughal days never overcame the disabilities of its plebeian origin, and it did not attain its æsthetic possibilities until it came under the sheltering wing of royal patronage—first of the Mughals and subsequently under their inspiration of other Hindu princes.

Dr. Coomaraswamy has, I believe, been far too generous in his estimate of the æsthetic merits of these paintings.

“That the handling is light and casual does not imply a poverty of craftsmanship (the quality of roughness in

‘primitives’ of all ages seems to unsophisticated observers a defect), but rather perfect adequacy—it is the direct expression of a flashing religious conviction and of freedom from any specific material interest. This is the most spiritual form known to us in Indian painting, and perhaps the most accomplished in technique, but not the most emotional nor the most intriguing. Human interest and charm, on the other hand, are represented in Ajantā painting and in late Rajput art.”*

After a careful study of the old Kalpa Sūtras and a large number of illustrated Jaina MSS. and the pictures of the *Vasanta Vilāsa*, I do not think that this pre-Mughal phase of Indian painting deserves the tribute that Dr. Coomaraswamy paid to it. I have not been able to see much spiritual or æsthetic merit in the pictures of the beautifully illuminated MSS. of the Kalpa Sūtras. On the contrary, the excessive use of gold illumination in pictures and writing strikingly exhibits the poverty of sure and accomplished craftsmanship; just as the use of coloured stones, and sometimes real gems, to indicate the eyes and the *īrnā* of Jaina Tirthankars in the medieval temples of Dilwara and most of the modern shrines is the proof of debased taste and inadequate mastery over the subject-matter of representation.

While the art of *Vasanta Vilāsa* and the Jaina MSS. is certainly one of “pure draughtsmanship,” the pictures cannot by any means be said to be adequate, let alone “brilliant statements of the facts” of the spring or of the life of Mahāvīra.

“There is no preoccupation with pattern, colour, or texture for their own sake; but these are achieved with inevitable assurance in a way that could not have been the case had they been directly sought. The drawing has, in fact, the perfect equilibrium of a mathematical

* “Catalogue of the Indian Collections,” Boston Museum, Part IV., p. 34.

equation, or a page of a composer's score. Theme and formula compose an inseparable unity, text and pictures form a continuous relation of the same dogma in the same key."*

Most students of Indian painting will agree with me now that this estimate of Dr. Coomaraswamy is perhaps too favourable, and that the art of these fourteenth and fifteenth century MSS. is primarily of archæological and historical rather than of æsthetic interest. The artistic decline from the days of Ajanta, Bagh, and Ellora is altogether extraordinary, and must be attributed to the disappearance of centres of royal patronage and a general deterioration of taste. But this seems less inexplicable when it is remembered that while the art of painting experienced only a change of medium, a shrinking in size, and debasement of artistic values compared to the days of the classical frescoes, sculpture suffered not only a decline, but almost totally disappeared after the twelfth century as serious art, particularly in northern India.

Even in the illustrations of the *Vasanta Vilāsa*, with the inspiring themes of love, spring, and beauty, the lyrical quality which is usually found in the later Hindu pictures of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not always present. In fact, the pictorial treatment of the poem cannot be compared with the outstanding elegance and poetry of the literary composition. While it may be conceded that it is an art of symbols, its indifferent representation is a serious flaw, and can be put down only to inadequate craftsmanship and incomplete mastery of significant form and design. Elegance is obviously lacking, but the most striking thing is the poverty of imagination exhibited in the treatment of the

* Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

very themes which generally inspire the highest flights of the lyrical muse. There is no doubt a certain quality of vigorous movement which is mostly seen in the delineation of birds, animals, and women. It is always the hands and the fingers which are most expressive. Facial expression is generally the same, and the various figures are indistinguishable from one another on the score of features. Eyes, too, are there only as anatomical parts of the body, and their conventional treatment—their oval shape and “the projection of the further eye”—excludes the exhibition of the subtlest and deepest feelings and emotions of the human actors. Consequently the long tapering and sensitive fingers do alone the work of “speaking.” While strictly conventional and restricted in its vocabulary of expression, this medieval art exhibits a certain quality of freedom, vigour, and insouciance, quite distinct from the elegant, refined, and lyrical Hindu art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as if the artist really enjoyed painting his versions of the poetry. Its outstanding feature is not its spiritualism or lyricism, but its adherence to the facts and pleasures of the world as it is. It is a bourgeois art with its emphasis on the ordinary joys of life, sometimes petty and even gross though they may be. Small gardens, flower swings, comfortable beds, gaudy hangings, and, above all, the pleasures of the flesh—these are the preoccupations of this art of the fifteenth century. There is nothing great or gorgeous, for it is the art inspired, or rather maintained, by the wealthy bourgeoisie, which does not dream of the adventures of the palaces or soar to the heights of religious ecstasies or ascetic renunciations. Everything is pitched in a lower key. Even the exquisite marble traceries of Abu do not conjure up the visions of the Tāj,

or the palaces of Datia, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, or Delhi. They suggest rather the cost, the extraordinary craftsmanship, and also the "smallness" of design. So with even the finest illuminated and illustrated MSS. of the period. The dazzling pages prove and reflect the fine quality of the gold and the paper—the balance and wisdom of the business community which extended its patronage to the spoilt community of illuminators and painters. But as the dance-master lamented in Kuttanī Matam by Damodara Gupta, the minister of Jayāpīda (*circa* A.D. 755-786), that he and his troupe of danseuses had resorted to the temple of Vishvanath at Kashi, as the Emperor Harsha, the great patron of art, was no more,* it was not until the time of Akbar that the art of painting again found its proper environment, and within the space of half a century reached its zenith under the genial patronage of the Mughal court.

In estimating the Gujarati art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it must not be forgotten that we are dealing with an extraordinarily interesting phase of popular bourgeois art. What the contemporary art at the magnificent courts of Ahmedabad, and earlier of Patan, was like, we have no means of judging. But if it was at all of the kind and standard of the magnificent remains of the time of Sidharāj Jayasimh (A.D. 1094-1143) and Kumārpāl (A.D. 1143-1174),† it must have been in the epic style of the fresco paintings of Ajanta and Bāgh. We have a few portraits of the period—one of Kumārpāl and another of a Gujarati poet Bhālan

* See verses 794 and 799, and also my article on the development of modern *Swāng* in the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society* for September, 1928.

† See Forbes' "Rās Mālā," vol. i., ch. x., xi.

(A.D. 1439-1539)—which are interesting as specimens showing the gulf between the highly cultivated art of the court and the work produced for the wealthy middle classes. The art of the Kalpa Sūtras and *Vasanta Vilāsa* is by no stretch of imagination “the most spiritual” or “the most accomplished in technique”; it is the final stage of decadence before its revival under the Mughals. It is marked by good paper, plenty of gold illumination, but it is poor in qualities of expression, movement, and representation, and generally lacking in elegance and charm. It is not so much a “primitive” phase, characterized by vigour of movement and sincerity of expression, as one maintained and inspired by an unimaginative *clientèle* who wanted religious merit, and patronized art and learning in their own way, but who never forgot the value of money. It was a time of democratic ferment, unsettled political conditions, religious questionings, and general unrest, which culminated a century later in that great resurgence of Indian culture in its widest aspect which was the greatest glory of the Mughals.*

* I have recently discovered an interesting picture roll painted in 1490 *Samvat* (A.D. 1433) at Chāmpāner, the old capital of Gujarat. There are but six pictures, the biggest being $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 11 inches, and the smallest being over $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 11 inches. The pictures are æsthetically superior to those of the *Vasanta Vilāsa*.



Picture No. 8.



Picture No. 26.



Picture No. 27.



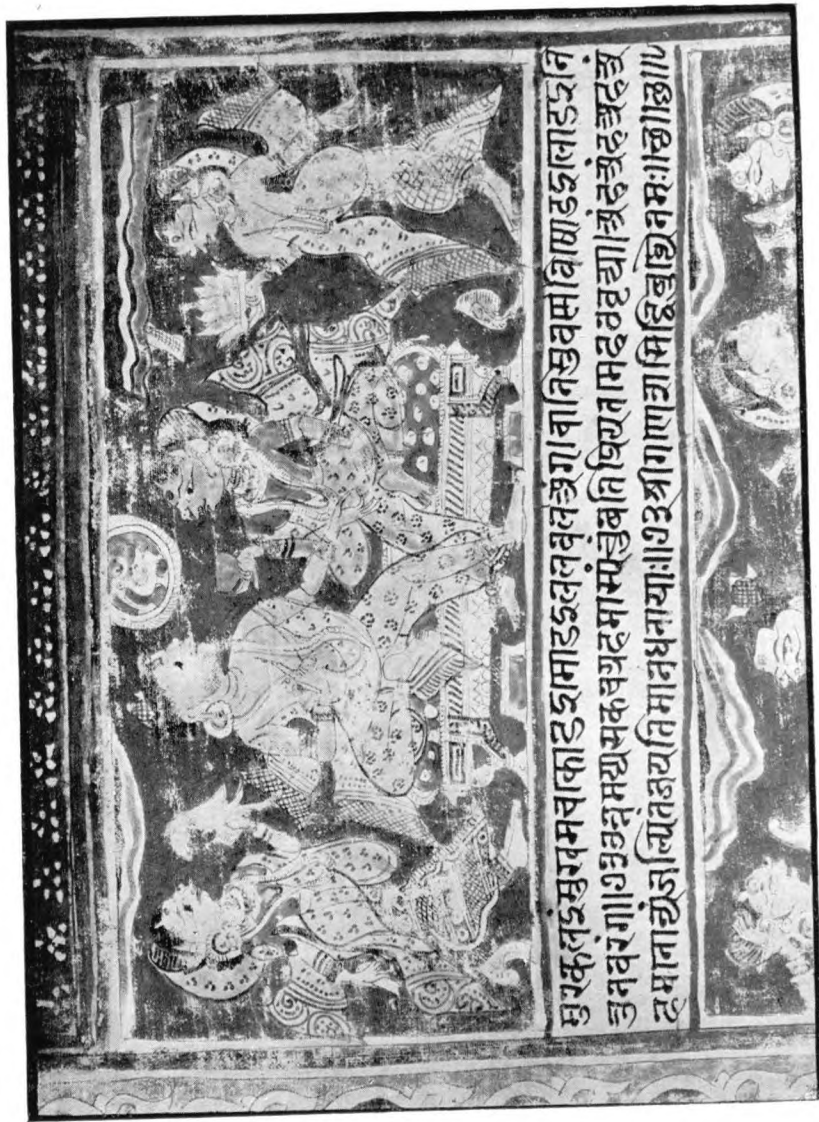
Picture No. 35.



Picture No. 36.



Picture No. 38.



Picture No. 48.



Picture No. 49.

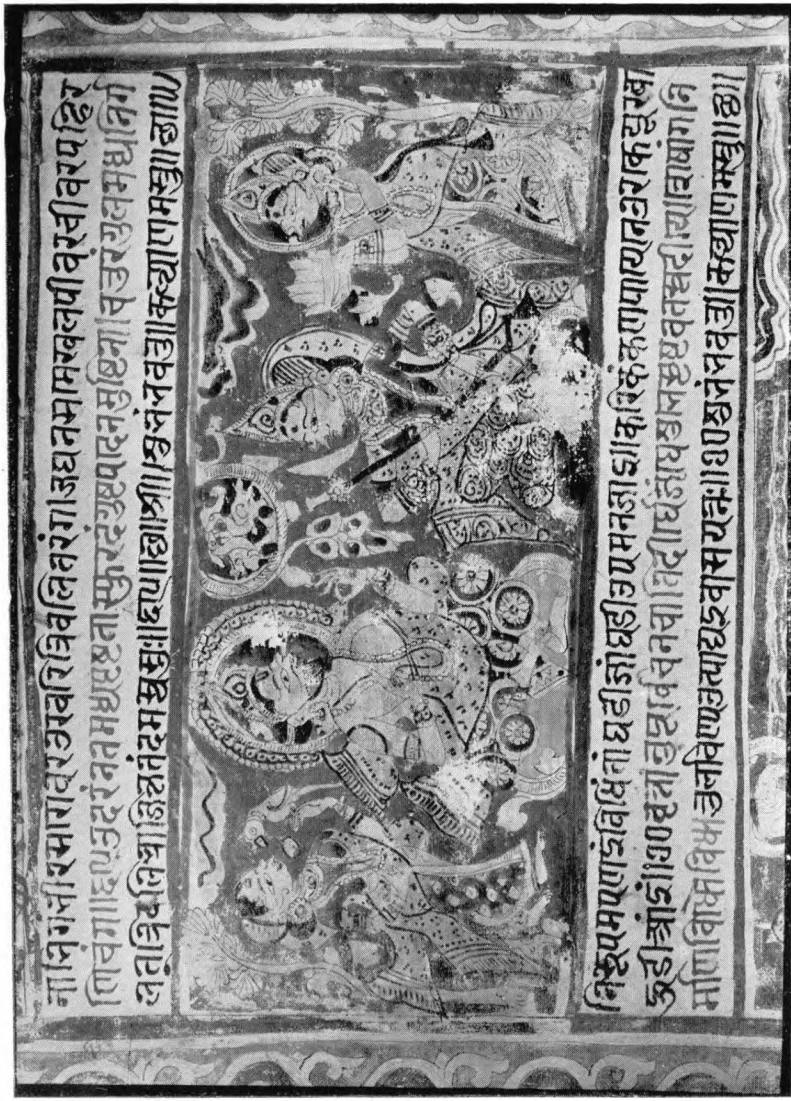


Picture No. 51.



Picture No. 58.

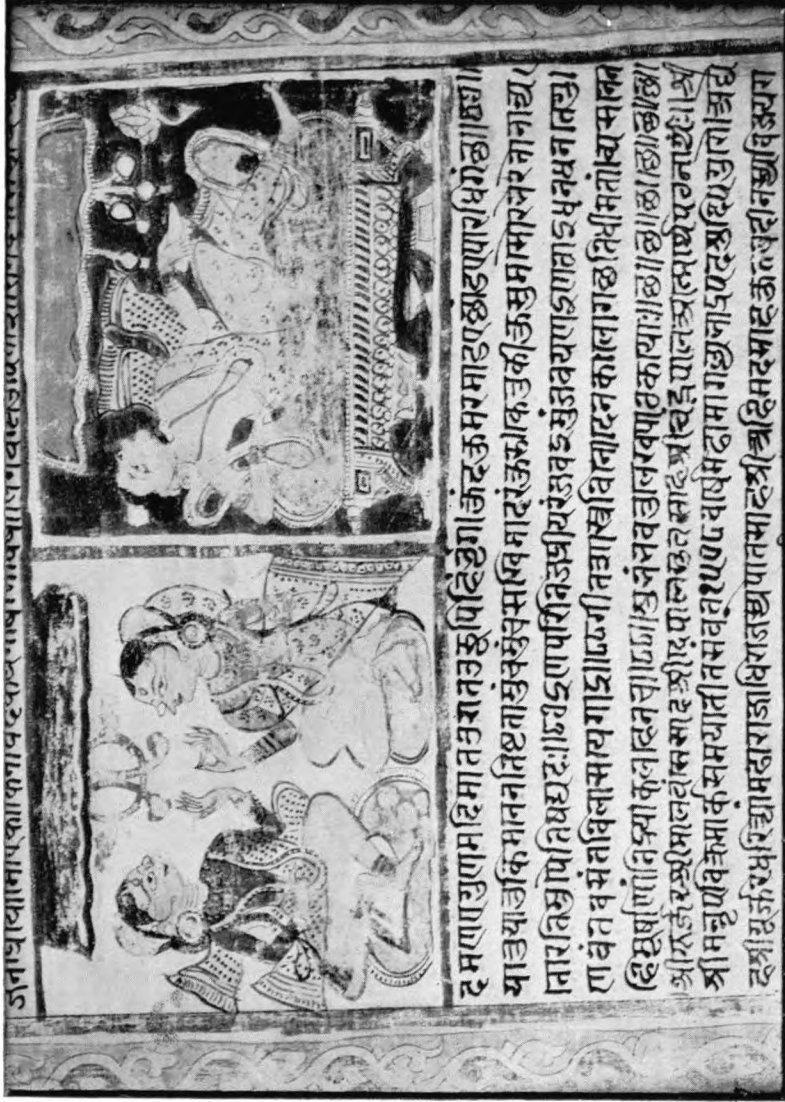
Picture No. 61.



Picture No. 62.



Picture No. 64.



Picture No. 77.

अशुका केशयनास्त्रीरान्नसुदराकावसुपतनेविहसुदारिद्रता सर्वत्र सुप्रदावणस्य
द्वितं दुर्वधिसा निमित्तं ॥ ८१ ॥ श्रीसूर्यायेनमाः श्रीगणत्राय नमः ॥ श्रीसरस्वत्ये नमः ॥ ८२ ॥



निनु निनुवरीश्रपमरुजगत्तुगधुकरंगिभमरनमानमरणावलीणउतसर
सरंगि ॥ ८३ ॥ अथैवंपकधिया नवकस्मिकारंगुष्यसुगंधराद्विनष्टपिधिविरीकः ॥
प्रीतामक्षानिरमयमशुष्यसोनाथसंभुतनिजाननवाभिना ॥ ८४ ॥ ८५ ॥





धिरदमस्तुतदनागलुकागलुकरननुपपिवायस्मनागुणवराणपञ्चरणपत्तुद्वि
त्राधि॥धगप्रयसःप्रविताताहृदयस्त्रयंमंगलायक्लिकाविदंगना॥तारणप्रज्ञमि
वाकाराङ्गत्वंनयारुपरिहारवह्नी॥धधआमयनागप्रशाम्भयासन्नुक्षिप्ता॥
रक्षाद्यथवार्थलिनःक्षतांतनागाबलियुगविरावःस्त्रीलजस्मोरध्वपिशसंगक्षरी॥धध